Writing Assessment, Evaluation, and Response
ENGL 5358 Spring 2009
Preston Hall 304
Wednesday 2:00-4:50

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MavSpace Ticket for Readings:
https://mavspace.uta.edu/xythoswfs/webview/_xy-666000_1

Course Description
Perhaps more than ever, students of all ages are expected to demonstrate scholastic competence as a condition of advancement, and schools at all levels (elementary, secondary, postsecondary) are feeling increased pressure from federal, state, and institutional entities to demonstrate teaching effectiveness. Consequently, valid, reliable, fair assessments of student learning have never been more important. This situation is particularly problematic when it comes to the assessment of writing, which is as idiosyncratic and context-bound as any academic subject. Teachers and administrators of writing programs must remain abreast of best practices for writing assessment not only to increase their chances for success but also as a defense against outside pressure to assess writing in cheaper, quicker, simpler ways.

In this seminar, you’ll be introduced to significant research into writing assessment that has been conducted over the past 25 years or so. We’ll examine some of the issues involved in classroom, program, and large-scale assessment, and we’ll trace the movement from objective tests to holistic scoring of essays to portfolio assessment as the preferred method of assessment. In the second half of the course, we’ll consider the theoretical underpinnings of various methods of assessment, procedures for conducting assessments, and the political implications of writing assessment. The idea is to follow more of a case-study model than a coverage model—we’ll look at individual (but typical) controversies and advances in research rather than trying to digest everything that’s been discovered.

This seminar will be of interest to anyone who wants to find out more about writing assessment, including current and future writing teachers or writing program administrators. It should also prove to be useful jumping-off point for anyone who’s interested in conducting research into writing assessment.

Requirements
• Weekly short responses (1-2 pages) to reading assignments
• A formal paper (10-15 pages) pursuing an issue raised by the research literature
• Brief oral reports presenting your project in proposal and near-final stages
Schedule

January 21
Introductions, “CCCC Position Statement: Writing Assessment”

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

January 28
• Sommers, “Responding to Student Writing”
• Sommers, “Across the Drafts”
• Rutz, “Recovering the Conversation”

February 4
• Brannon, “On Students’ Rights”
• Smith, “Genre of the End Comment”
• Fife, “Moving Beyond the End Comment”

February 11
• Selections from Theory and Practice of Grading
• Huot, “Toward a New Discourse”

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

February 18
• Charney, “Validity of Using Holistic”
• Huot, “Reliability, Validity, and Holistic Scoring”
• Elbow and Yancey, “On the Nature of Holistic Scoring”

February 25
• Elbow and Belanoff, “Portfolios as a Substitute for Proficiency Exams”
• Roemer, Schultz, and Durst, “Portfolios and the Process of Change”
• White, “The Scoring of Writing Portfolios: Phase 2”

March 4
• Haswell and Wyche-Smith, “Adventuring into Writing Assessment”
• White, “The Opening of the Modern Era of Writing Assessment: A Narrative”
• Yancey, “Looking Back as We Look Forward: Historicizing Writing Assessment”

LARGE-SCALE ASSESSMENT

March 11
• Barritt, Stock, and Clark, “Researching Practice: Evaluating Assessment Essays”
• Huot, “The Literature of Direct Writing Assessment: Major Concerns and Prevailing Trends”
• Sullivan, “Calling Writers’ Bluffs: The Social Production of Writing Ability in University Placement-Testing”

March 25
• Hoetker and Brossell, “A Procedure for Writing Content-Fair Essay Examination Topics for Large-Scale Writing Assessments”
• Moss, “Validity in High Stakes Writing Assessment: Problems and Possibilities”
• Weigle, “Teaching Writing Teachers about Assessment”

THEORY
April 1
• White, “Issues and Problems in Writing Assessment”
• Bizzell, “What Can We Know, What Must We Do, What May We Hope”
• Huot, “Toward a New Theory of Writing Assessment”

METHODS AND PROCEDURES
April 8
• Brossell and Ash, “An Experiment with the Wording of Essay Topics”
• Engelhard, Walker, and Gordon, “Writing Tasks and Gender: Influences on Writing Quality of Black-and-White Students”
• Johnson, Penny, and Gordon, “Score Resolution and the Interrater Reliability of Holistic Scores in Rating Essays”

April 15
• Hoetker and Brossell, “The Effects of Systematic Variations in Essay Topics on the Writing Performance of College Freshmen”
• Charney, “Response to Hoetker and Brossell”
• Hoetker and Brussell, “Reply”
• Wiggins, “The Constant Danger of Sacrificing Validity to Reliability: Making Writing Assessment Serve Writers”

POLITICS AND ISSUES
April 22
• Haswell and Haswell, “Gender Bias and Critique of Student Writing”
• Keesing-Styles, “The Relationship between Critical Pedagogy and Assessment in Teacher Education”
April 29

- Ball, “Expanding the Dialogue on Culture as a Critical Component when Assessing Writing”
- Price, “Accessing Disability: A Nondisabled Student Works the Hyphen”

May 6

- Faigley, “Judging Writing, Judging Selves”
- Gleason, “Evaluating Writing Programs in Real Time: The Politics of Remediation”